

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0130

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS MASS MMOL MPOL SOCI VM LA
SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE BASE AT SENO

REF: A VIENTIANE 0126, B VIENTIANE 0020

1. A LAO MAN WHO HAS ACCURATELY REPORTED CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTH OF LAOS TO US ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER JANUARY 29 THAT HE HAD SPOKEN TO A LAO WHO HAD BEEN INSTALLING AN ELECTRICAL SYSTEM IN THE SRV MILITARY BASE AT SENO FOR THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS. THE LAO FROM SENO REPORTEDLY HAD SEEN TEN MIG JET AIRCRAFT BASED AT SENO AIRFIELD THAT WERE CAMOUFLAGED UNDER TREES AND NEVER TEST FLOWN. HE SAID THAT SEVERAL CARGO AIRCRAFT WERE ALSO BASED AT SENO.

2. THE SENO LAO SAID THAT SEVERAL THOUSAND SRV TROOPS HAD BEEN DISPATCHED FROM SENO TO KAMPUCHEA RECENTLY (REF A).

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3. HE TOLD OUR SOURCE THAT HE HAD INSTALLED "NEW SOPHISTICATED" ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT OF US MAKE FOR THE VIETNAMESE IN SENO. HE HAD ALSO INSTALLED ELECTRICAL LINES ALONG ROUTE 9 WHERE HE REPORTED SEEING MANY FORMER ROYAL LAO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WORKING ON ROAD GANGS.

4. HE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE NOUHAK PHOUMSAVANH AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF DEFENCE, AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY GENERAL KHAMTAY SIPHANDONE HAD MADE FREQUENT VISITS TO THE VIETNAMESE MILITARY BASE AT SENO.

5. HE SAID THAT THE VIETNAMESE TROOPS WERE UNPOPULAR WITH THE LOCAL POPULATION. RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN SAVANNAKHET HAD INCREASED NOTICEABLY SINCE THE KAMPUCHEAN/SRV CONFLICT WAS MADE PUBLIC IN DECEMBER. THE LAO FARMERS PARTICULARLY RESENTED THE VIETNAMESE PRESENCE BECAUSE THE FARMERS WERE FORBIDDEN TO SLAUGHTER ANIMALS FOR THEIR OWN CONSUMPTION. THEY WERE FORCED TO SELL THEIR STOCK AT A LOWER THAN COST, GOVERNMENT SET PRICE SO THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD PROVIDE THE VIETNAMESE TROOPS WITH A DAILY RATION OF MEAT.

6. HE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE VIETNAMESE TROOPS HAD BOUGHT WHITE RICE FROM THAI SMUGGLERS AND WERE THUS NOT A DRAIN ON THE SCARCE GLUTINOUS RICE STOCKS OF THE LOCAL FARMERS. HE SAID THAT THE FREE MARKET PRICE OF FIRST QUALITY GLUTINOUS RICE IN SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE WAS 900 KIP PER KILO, NEARLY THREE TIMES THE PRICE IN VIENTIANE.
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7. COMMENT: LAO RESISTANCE FORCES WOULD SEEM TO BE TAKING ADVANTAGE BOTH OF THE REPORTED REDUCED SRV TROOP STRENGTH IN SAVANNAKHET AND THE LOCAL ANTI VIETNAMESE SENTIMENT.

8. THE HIGH PRICE OF FIRST QUALITY GLUTINOUS RICE IN SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE ONLY TWO MONTHS AFTER THE MAIN HARVEST SUPPORTS THE LPDR/UNDP REPORT OF A SEVERE RICE SHORTAGE THERE (REF B).
ROBERTS

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